

walk in the sun by ashers_kiss

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Language: English

Characters: Callahan (Stranger Things), Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Florence "Flo" (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Powell (Stranger Things), Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers/Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers & Eleven, Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

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Summary:

“Y’know,” Jim says to her once, “you should probably come in at some point. To a real house, I mean.”

Or, Hopp adopts El, because they deserve family goddamnit.

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Author's Note:

- For [RosaLui](#).

This is all rosalui's fault. As most of these things are. But it's also the story I wanted once I finished s1, because how dare they.

I make no promises about when this will be updated. This is something fun to work on when I need to get out of my head and away from other projects. Hopefully (maybe? I have an event to hold and two challenge fics and moving house to do) before s2 drops.

It has, of course, already been jossed by the s2 trailer. But that's why fic exists.

All pairings are endgame and will happen eventually. Honest. I don't think I could write this fic without them in it. But the updating rule will impact that.

Title from Girls Just Want to Have Fun by Cyndi Lauper, because I did freaking *research* and that album came out in 1983, and because I think everyone in this will love that song, secretly or not.

"Y'know," Jim says to her once, "you should probably come in at some point. To a real house, I mean."

El – because the hell he's calling this kid *Eleven*, the hell is she some fucking number, no matter what they scratched out on her arm – looks up at him from her Eggos, mouth stuffed full enough that her cheeks bulge. She swallows first before she speaks though. "Why?"

"Wh – okay." Jim tips back in his seat a little, the one rickety chair in this tiny little hunting cabin El's found for herself. There are holes in the wall, not just for guns, and the wind's vicious, but she seems to

like it. It took nearly a month of leaving food, of waiting for her to appear when he hung around after, for her to bring him back here. "You ever seen snow?" When she just keeps staring at him, he leans forward again. "Because we get snow. Sometimes a lot. Kind of a miracle we've not had any yet, but that just means it's gonna come with bigger and meaner storms. It'll be cold, colder than it is now, and that blanket's not going to keep you warm."

Her eyes dart to the moth-eaten rag she's piled on the mattress, even though Jim's pretty sure it was originally a dog blanket. "What do you want me to do?" Her words are careful, like they always are, and – Jim doesn't know if he's the one that taught her that, that he only ever wants something from her, or if it was that bastard Bremmer, but he curses them both anyway.

He shrugs. "You could come stay with me."

El's mouth does the not quite a twist she does when she's thinking, looking back down at her food. When she looks up, she nods, far too solemn for the bubbles suddenly fizzing in Jim's gut. "Okay."

Just like that. "Okay," Jim repeats. Then, "Okay then," and passes her a soda.

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He puts some work into it. He's got a buddy out in Lafayette who sorts him a birth certificate, another who lets him know, quiet-like, about a suitable crash on Route 52. Jim takes two days off work, sneaks El out in his trunk on the first and drives her back in his front seat with a clean dress and a dark little wig, complete with a bag full of clothes from the thriftstore four towns over. Her eyes look too big for her face as they drive through town, and it occurs to him it's the first time she's probably properly seen it.

("Didn't know you had a cousin, Chief," Callahan says, the soft apologetic of someone who knows they're prying and is going to keep doing it anyway.

Jim shrugs, tosses his last file on Flo's desk. "We were the last, apparently. Apart from the kid. Never were all that close." He shuts

his mouth before he gives too much, ruins all his own hard work, and Powell elbows Callahan so hard he grunts.)

He tells Joyce, because of course he does.

“She’s been in the *woods*?” Joyce’s mouth kind of hangs, until she shivers, rubs at her arms through her too big sweater. “Oh my God. All this time?”

“Taken me this long to get her to come in,” Jim admits, and steps closer. It’s not like it matters who hears this bit, and besides, the only ones around are Jonathan and Will, doing something out back that involves Will yelling encouragement, but still – “I need your help,” he says, and Joyce’s head jerks up. “I’m not – I’m not good with broken things. With kids. And she likes you.”

“You did pretty good with her yourself,” Joyce mutters, but she’s sniffing a bit, like she remembers – too much.

“People are gonna expect me to ask you,” he tries, and she rolls her eyes, but she’s smiling.

“Well we can’t let people down now, can we.”

So Joyce is waiting for them at the trailer, and El’s face brightens the moment she sees her through the glass, her mouth turning up in a shy smile that honestly, Jim would pay to see again. “It’s so good to see you again,” Joyce tells her, and then when El just keeps on hovering between them, fingers flexing on the strap of her bag, “Can I hug you?” She waits for El to think about it, to nod, before she sweeps her up. It looks like it should hurt, the force in that hug (the sheer *relief* on Joy’s face), but El’s still smiling, her shoulders coming down inch by inch, and Jim figures the more hugs she gets, the better.

“We’ve got your room all set up for you,” Joyce says once they’ve hustled inside, and Jim’s pretty sure he gives her the same wide-eyed look El does, because he put clean sheets on in the spare room before he left, but he’s not sure that counts as – “Will’s given me one of his sketchbooks for you, and some crayons, and I dropped off a couple of books I had when I was a kid, in case you... And I made us some

dinner, it's just a pot roast and I'm pretty sure it's going to be awful, but it'll be better than cold Eggos all the time, maybe." She smiles down at El, stops talking finally; there's something hard in Jim's throat, something he can't quite swallow round.

El's got her thinking face on again. "So...you live here, too?" she says slowly, and Joyce's eyes fly to Jim's.

"Oh! Um, no, no, I live a bit away with my boys, remem – oh, you didn't see – " Joyce takes a breath. "Hopp's my friend, and I'd like to be your friend, too, and I thought you guys might like some company." El's eyes start shining, big and bright and Joyce ducks her head, gives one of those little laughs she does more and more now, now that Will's back. "If you want me here, of course."

"Yes please," El whispers, eventually, and Jim would pay to see Joyce smile like that again too.

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"Have you told Mike Wheeler yet?" Joyce murmurs after dinner (a slightly singed, slightly salty pot roast) as they watch El poke around the trailer, exploring. She's still got her wig on, even though Jim's pretty sure it's got to be itching by now.

"You think I should?"

The look Joyce gives him is one of those ones that says she's underestimated how much of an idiot he is. "I got the rest of the moms to hold back for a day or two, but they'll come, and they'll bring food and toys and any other kids they have round about her age. You want him to be prepared."

"Yeah," Jim says, watching El peer at the phone suspiciously, because he should've thought of that one already. "Yeah, I guess."

Joyce pats his arm and says nothing.

El looks slightly betrayed two hours later when Joyce starts making a move; Joyce opens up her arms for another hug, though it takes El a moment to get it. "I'll be back tomorrow," she promises, then seems to fumble. Jim takes a step, automatic. "If you want me to?" El nods

furiously, and there's that relief again.

"Gonna have to let go of her at some time, kid," Jim says, careful, but it's been going on five minutes and he knows Will's due home soon. El steps back immediately, says, "Yes Chief," like it's nothing, and Joyce gives him another one of those looks before she smiles at El again and heads out the door. And yeah, that's – that's going to be an issue.

"Y'know you don't have to call me Chief, right?" he tells her later, when they're sitting on the couch and El's pretending she isn't scratching at her wig. She gives him one of those expectant looks, like she knows there's more to this but doesn't get it, and he tries a smile of his own. "We're meant to be family, remember? Cousins. Can't have people thinking too hard about it."

El's mouth does the twisty thing again. "What do you want me to call you?"

Yeah, they're definitely going to have to work on that. "You could call me Uncle Jim," he suggests, just as careful, and she doesn't say a word but she's clearly spent enough time with Joyce already to have perfected *that* look. "Yeah, it's crap," Jim agrees. He drops his head against the back of the couch and huffs up at the ceiling. "What about – " Not dad, not – not again. Besides, as far as everyone else knows, she already had a dad, an asshole of the highest order, true (Jim may have enjoyed spinning that part a bit too much), but one she just watched die horribly in a terrible wreck. And not Jim, either, there's no one left who – "What about Hopp?"

"Hopp." Not a question or a disagreement; more like she's trying the word out.

"Sure." Jim lifts his head, finds her watching him with all that intensity. "Like Joyce does."

It takes another minute or two, but in the end, El nods, and something in Jim's chest eases. "I like Hopp," she says, and shifts closer.

She falls asleep like that, curled up against him on the couch

watching TV ("I like TV," she says, simple and bright; Jim gets the feeling there wasn't much else to do in the Wheelers' basement), her wig slipping sideways. Jim eases it off and sets it down beside him, turns the volume down. It doesn't take long before his own eyes are closing, heavier and heavier every time he tries to open them again, and the next thing he knows, sun's pouring in and Joyce is standing over both of them, smiling soft and sweet.